

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHRB #0854/01 2921802  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 191802Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0754  
INFO RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 4737  
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS RABAT 000854

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [WI](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER EMPHASIZES WESTERN SAHARA

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi welcomed the Ambassador to Morocco during a one-hour call on October 12. El Fassi emphasized our excellent relations as well as Morocco's ties to Africa and the Arab World. El Fassi appealed for U.S. support for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara. The Ambassador highlighted his desire to build on the President's Cairo speech, the Nobel Peace Prize, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Compact. END SUMMARY.

-----  
RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
-----

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador began his courtesy calls with a one-hour call on the Prime Minister on October 12. The DCM was also present. El Fassi emphasized our privileged relations, as exemplified by the FTA and the MCA Compact. He underscored Morocco's choice to be allied with the United States both in the 1700s and after regaining its independence in 1956. The Prime Minister noted that the 1958 Constitution guaranteed political pluralism. El Fassi also pointed to Morocco's political and human rights advances over the last 10 years. Highlighting the status of women, he pointed to King Mohammed VI's decision to reserve places for women in the 2002 and 2007 parliamentary elections and the 2009 municipal elections. He noted that the King and the Government were now focused on judicial reform. In fact, he said that earlier in the afternoon, he had chaired a meeting to review ministers' prerogatives, with a view toward eliminating most discretionary authorities.

-----  
UNIQUE IN AFRICA AND ARAB WORLD  
-----

¶3. (SBU) The Prime Minister then turned to Morocco's uniqueness in Africa and the Arab World. Going back and forth between Morocco's establishment as a state in the 700s and its changing borders, El Fassi noted that Morocco has existed with similar borders since the first Arab dynasty established itself over 12 centuries ago. Following occupation and resistance, Morocco negotiated with France and Spain to reclaim its territory, with the French withdrawing in 1956; the Spanish ceding the north in 1957; Spain subsequently ceding Sidi Ifni; and Spain ultimately returning the Western Sahara in 1975. He pointed out that the world changed significantly, however, between 1956 and 1975. Algeria, which had not existed until 1962, used those 20 years to build links with 20 or more like-minded one-party states and military dictatorships in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Algeria persuaded those countries that the Polisario deserved their support and recognition.

¶4. (SBU) El Fassi emphasized that since Morocco withdrew from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) over the OAU's admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, it has courted African countries. More than 8,000 Sub-Saharan African students are currently studying everything from agronomy to medicine in Morocco on full scholarships.

¶5. (SBU) Morocco, according to El Fassi, has also created a unique role for itself in the Arab World. It is a moderate in the Arab League. It refuses to deal with HAMAS. It represents a bulwark against extremism.

-----  
AUTONOMY FOR WESTERN SAHARA  
-----

¶6. (SBU) The Prime Minister then turned to Western Sahara, explaining that Morocco had developed the 2007 autonomy plan for Western Sahara to offer an honorable compromise to settle the dispute. The plan includes Sahrawi control over most executive, legislative and judicial functions. Moreover, it is a serious and credible proposal. El Fassi stressed that the Polisario and Algeria lacked credibility; one had only to look at the 3,000 people who have fled Tindouf since 1975, with none leaving Western Sahara for the camps. The Prime Minister concluded

his remarks by appealing for U.S. support for the autonomy plan.

-----  
BUILDING ON CAIRO SPEECH  
-----

¶7. (SBU) The Ambassador used the remaining 15 minutes to stress his pride in being the President's personal representative. He said he looked forward to building on the FTA, the MCA and the President's Cairo speech, which had certainly contributed to the Nobel Committee's decision to award President Obama the Nobel Peace prize. As the meeting ended, the Prime Minister and the Ambassador compared notes on their experiences as lawyers and diplomats.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: While Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri chose to save the Western Sahara discussion for a subsequent meeting, Prime Minister El Fassi made it a central issue for the Ambassador's first meeting with him. In fact, he subtly built his whole presentation about a changing world to lay the groundwork to appeal for U.S. support for the autonomy plan. END COMMENT.

KAPLAN